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COLONIALISM AND THE DANGER OF WAR

Mohammad Hatta

IN THE WORLD TODAY problems of war and peace are at the center of everyone's thoughts. The Berlin question has become acute since Prime Minister Khrushchev's announcement that he would sign a peace treaty with East Germany before the end of this year. The question of banning nuclear-weapons tests is a daily topic of conversation at diplomatic gatherings as well as in barber shops. Conferences on disarmament, which started during the time of the League of Nations, are still in session. The world outlook is gloomy rather than hopeful.

One of several vexed problems in the chess game of international politics concerns colonialism, a matter that is not sufficiently understood in the West. Although it is true that many former colonies have become independent states since World War II, there are still countries which desire to perpetuate and to strengthen colonialism. There was a time when colonial imperialism dominated international politics. But the course of history since World War I has favored the independence of nations. Meanwhile the family of independent states has grown steadily larger.

World War I brought independence to a number of oppressed nations in Central Europe and opened the door to independence for several colonized countries. World War II furthered the process. A great many colonized countries have become independent and have joined the United Nations. Hence it is hypocrisy to suppose that colonialism can be prolonged. To gaze backwards, pining for the days of old "colonial glory," is extremely dangerous.

Present developments display clear proof that colonialism creates a warlike spirit. The colonized nations are opening their eyes wider and are giving increasing thought to obtaining their independence as quickly as possible, the more so since they have seen so many of their sister nations become sovereign and independent. Does mankind need World War III to complete this process, which can be delayed no longer? The disaster that would be caused by a third world war we all know. And, as civilized and intelligent human beings, we must do our utmost to prevent it. If the validity of this statement is acknowledged, why are the fires of colonialism allowed to go on burning, for they will surely set the whole world aflame in a war of annihilation?

The peoples of the Western world are afraid primarily of communism, the influence and power of which increased after each world war. Is the West now preparing to accept another war--a war fos-

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tered by the spirit of colonialism--and thus invite communist control of the whole world? This will be an ineluctable consequence.

Each nation, no matter how backward it may be, has the right to independence. Once a nation has become convinced of the rightness of its cause, the ideal of independence can no longer be suppressed, as the histories of India and of Indonesia have demonstrated. Additional evidence may be seen today in the Congo. The ultimate independence of nations that are still colonies is not a matter for argument; it is only a matter of time. In this respect many lessons may be learned from the policy of Britain, which understood and acted wisely in regard to India. By recognizing the inevitable and by granting independence to India voluntarily, Britain forged a close friendship with India, which has largely forgotten the past. In striking contrast are the narrow attitudes taken by France with regard to Indochina and Algeria and by Holland vis-à-vis Indonesia. Independence that has been achieved by force of arms fosters vengeful sentiments that are not easily forgotten.

THE CONFLICT between Indonesia and the Netherlands, which has become increasingly threatening to world peace, has its origin in the colonial question, namely, in the problem of West Irian, or West New Guinea, as it is still called in the official colonial language of the West. Indonesia regards West Irian as a part of its territory, while the Netherlands claims the right to maintain its colonial rule there--naturally under the pretext of fulfilling its so-called sacred mission of preparing the population for self-government! Here we have a moral argument which the Dutch ignored previously and which they discovered only after they were obliged to relinquish sovereignty over the former Netherlands Indies to Indonesia.

This conflict cannot end until West Irian has been ceded to Indonesia. Every endeavor of the Dutch Government to defer the transfer of West Irian to Indonesia only complicates the problem and creates an atmosphere of mounting tension. Mr. Luns, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs, recently declared in the General Assembly of the United Nations that the Netherlands was ready to place West Irian under United Nations' Trusteeship, and pledged that the Netherlands would continue as before to contribute financially to the development of the territory. In this statement he spoke more like a desperate man than a wise politician, for he was well aware that such a proposal would not effect a solution, since it is unacceptable to Indonesia as a major party to the conflict. If the Netherlands is in fact willing to relinquish sovereignty over West Irian, then why not to Indonesia, which has claimed that disputed land as part of its national territory from the very beginning?

It is worth recalling the origin of the conflict. Article III of the 1947 Linggadjati Agreement, between the Netherlands Govern-

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ment and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia, states:

> The United States of Indonesia shall comprise the entire territory of the Netherlands Indies, with the provision, however, that in case the population of any territory, after due consultation with the other territories, should decide by democratic process that they are not, or not yet, willing to join the United States of Indonesia, they may establish a special relationship on behalf of such territory with the United States of Indonesia and with the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

Clearly, according to this article, the Netherlands undertook to relinquish the entire territory of the Netherlands Indies. As for the provisional exception, no part of Indonesia gave notice before the transfer of sovereignty that it was not, or not yet, willing to join the United States of Indonesia. And it is well known that any separatist movement occurring after Indonesia had become independent was of Dutch manufacture, sponsored and led by units of the Dutch colonial army before their repatriation.

Disagreement between the Republic of Indonesia and the Netherlands over implementation of the Linggadjati Agreement provided a welcome pretext for the Dutch to launch their first military action, which began in July 1947 and was halted only through the intervention of the United Nations Security Council. Under the auspices of the Good Offices Committee, the Renville Agreement was signed between Indonesia and the Netherlands in January 1948. This was a truce agreement which stipulated that the four principles of the Linggadjati Agreement should form a basis for political discussions. These principles provided for the independence of the Indonesian peoples; cooperation between the peoples of the Netherlands and Indonesia; a sovereign Indonesian state on a federal basis and under a constitution that was to be formulated by democratic processes; and a union comprising the United States of Indonesia and other parts of the Kingdom of the Netherlands under the Queen of the Netherlands.

At that time the Dutch had no intention yet of separating West Irian from the main body of Indonesia, nor was there any mention of such action during the negotiations that followed. The idea was not advanced until after the second military action, when it became clear to everybody that the Dutch-Indonesian conflict could be terminated only by a transfer of sovereignty without an interim transitional period. Plans were subsequently laid for a round-table conference that should have but one objective: the transfer of sovereignty over the former Netherlands Indies to the Government of the Republic of the United States of Indonesia.

For many Dutch people, who had grown grey in the colonial service, it was very hard to accept the loss of Indonesia. Involved was a loss both of prestige and of what had long been called "the cork supporting the welfare of the Netherlands." The financial

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loss could be offset by an economic agreement favoring Dutch interests in Indonesia. But the loss of prestige? Memories of former "colonial glory" could be kept alive only by retaining some part of the former Netherlands Indies under Dutch control. Hence the notion of excluding West Irian from the transfer of sovereignty. Dutch reservations concerning West Irian were mentioned for the first time at the Round Table Conference preparatory meeting in April 1949 at Djakarta, which produced the so-called Roem-Royen Agreement.

At the Round Table Conference at The Hague the Dutch tried to defend their new position by referring to Article III of the Linggadjati Agreement. But they soon admitted the logic of the positions of both Indonesian delegations, which denied the applicability of Article III to the inhabitants of West Irian as long as the great majority of them were not in a position to express their desires. Accordingly, under the terms of the Linggadjati Agreement, the Netherlands was obliged to transfer West Irian to Indonesia. Nevertheless, the Dutch insisted on holding West Irian, and were disinclined to listen to opposing arguments.

In an atmosphere of mounting tension the parties agreed to a United Nations formula calling for the maintenance of the status quo in West Irian, with the stipulation that, within a year after the transfer of sovereignty to the Republic of the United States of Indonesia, the question of West Irian's political status should be determined by negotiation between the governments. After repeated negotiations proved unsuccessful, the Dutch refused to participate in further discussions on the West Irian issue. To the Indonesian contention that the area was part of Indonesia just as it had been part of the Netherlands Indies before the transfer of sovereignty, the Dutch replied that there could be no question of a transfer of sovereignty without prior consultation of the inhabitants of West Irian, who would be permitted to exercise the right of self-determination at the appropriate time.

In retaliation against the Dutch withdrawal from their former Linggadjati position, the only course open to the Indonesian Government involved abrogation of the Dutch-Indonesian Union in 1956, followed by confiscation of Dutch properties in Indonesia as a temporary <u>political</u> counter-move to the Dutch retention of West Irian. The final step taken by the Indonesian Government was the severing of diplomatic relations with the Netherlands.

INDONESIA'S claim to West Irian represents a continuation of her struggle against colonialism, a struggle to complete her national independence. In this effort to achieve the highest ideal there is no place for compromise, as history in all periods has demonstrated. In the course of the accompanying excitement, armed conflict can hardly be avoided. Any such clash of arms, no matter how small, could set off a new world war with all its disastrous conse-

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quences for mankind.

Indonesia's claim to West Irian is supported by public opinion in most of Asia and Africa, which have similar problems. It goes without saying that communist countries as well back Indonesia. The Asian-African Conference at Bandung unanimously declared that "colonialism in all its manifestations is an evil which should speedily be brought to an end." Since then many African peoples have become independent; and as more peoples become independent, anti-colonial sentiment will become stronger in the world.

The people of the United States, recalling their own history, are anti-colonialist by sentiment. But this sentiment alone is not enough. The United States should actively demonstrate its antipathy for colonialism and should try energetically to wipe out this symbol of injustice. Its indifferent attitude toward colonial conflicts undercuts its own endeavors to maintain world peace.

Like it or not, a basic prerequisite for settling the problems of the present-day world is the recognition of the right of every nation to be independent. Any qualification of this recognition, whatever its pretext, should be condemned. Such recognition should be followed by joint efforts to make independence meaningful and to assist the economically underdeveloped nations in shaping their societies according to their own ideals.

MOHAMMAD HATTA, a prominent figure in Indonesian public life, was Vice-President of the Republic of Indonesia from 1945 to 1956. He is the founder of the cooperative movement in Indonesia, and the author of numerous studies of Indonesian affairs.

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